DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 224 CS 506 140

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TITLE The Publishing Rubric: A Context for Magazine Curriculum Development.
PUB DATE Mar 87
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; *Curriculum Design; *Curriculum Development; Degree Requirements; Higher Education; *Periodicals; *Publishing Industry; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS Loyola College MD

ABSTRACT

To prepare college graduates for careers in the magazine publishing industry, a magazine curriculum requires a complex array of disparate courses. Small colleges offer the best environment for reformatting magazine education. In order for a magazine curriculum to develop, grow, and thrive it must have access to students with specialized interests as well as to generalists, and this is more easily accomplished in a non-restrictive small college environment where students are encouraged to cross disciplinary lines. The publishing overview accurately presages the entry level positions that graduates will find open to them in the industry. In addition to basic journalistic writing skills, training is required in graphics, word processing, promotion and public relations, and the legal aspects of publishing. The decision to initiate a publishing major or sequence rests on the ready availability of certain courses in the curriculum, a local pool of adjunct faculty talent, and a market for the program based on potential students and employment data in the region served by the college. At Loyola College of Maryland, a typical program of study includes: (1) a common liberal arts core; (2) a communications core; (3) seven major courses, including manuscript evaluation and editing, writing book review and promotional copy, magazine article writing; (4) five interdepartmental courses; and (5) optional communications electives. (MM)

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THE PUBLISHING RUBRIC: A CONTEXT FOR MAGAZINE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Published in Magazine Matter March 1987, official publication of the Magazine Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC)

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A professional curriculum focusing on magazines probably requires a more complex array of disparate courses than any other degree program in the communications field.

In many institutions this costly situation translates into a non-programmatic approach to magazine education. The result is usually a few magazine electives loosely appended to what is essentially a journalism concentration. Yet it is the very diversity of courses required for effective professional magazine education that should be its strength and actually mitigate the economic factors arrayed against a full commitment to the magazine major at most institutions.

If magazines are often viewed as too narrow an academic specialty, it is only because the market for such education is considered limited. Every institution has its own standard as to the number of students that comprises a viable major, thereby justifying a commitment of full-time faculty, resources, space and equipment. While the larger programs at some state universities provide enough of a pool of communications majors to make a magazine concentration fiscally feasible, others of these universities don't even consider a comprehensive curricular approach to magazine education. The situation worsens at the smaller private liberal arts colleges.

But it is probably in the small-college arena that the greatest opportunity exists to reformat magazine education. (The new Communications major at Loyola College in Maryland is one example of how to integrate magazine concerns into the curriculum

without playing the numbers game. Loyola has about 200 communications majors out of a total undergraduate enrollment of 2,700 students.)

The free-standing journalism school, with its academic barriers to upper division admission firmly in place and further isolated by the constraints of accreditation, may find it difficult to engage in the cross-disciplinary conceptualization required for effective magazine education. The smaller college department may have more options regarding faculty credentials, course development and positioning its various communications concentrations to attract minors as well as majors.

The trend among those majoring in communications is toward advertising and public relations, leaving a diminishing number of Print Journalism students to be shared among the news-editorial disciplines. Furthermore, the numerical politics of news-editorial sequences dictate that the "newspaper types" on the faculty outnumber the "magazine or book (publishing) types", perpetually limiting the growth of and competition from these non-mainstream programs. The general acceptance of the notion that training in "news for newspapers" is a perfectly viable way to prepare for entry into the magazine field further exacerbates the second-class status of magazine education.

It wasn't too long ago that a major in English or other humanities discipline was considered sufficient for an entry level position in journalistic work. Now that the news-editorial people have shed that yoke, it's time for the non-newspaper

journalism faculties to do the same if magazine education is to emerge in its own right.

The domain of the newspaper and the broadcast journalist is ruled by the generalists. Increasingly, even at the consumer level, magazine publishing is the preserve of the specialist. In order for a magazine (as well as a book) curriculum to develop, grow and thrive it must have access to students with specialized interests as well as to generalists. This is more easily accomplished in a non-restrictive small college environment where students are encouraged to cross disciplinary lines through a system of majors, minors and waivers.

As the liberal arts begin to awaken from a generation-long slumber, the pendulum swing back toward the humanities does not portend well for business career programs and perhaps other forms of career education, such as communications. However, the humanities specialists will continue to shop for practical minors (education, etc.) that will accelerate them toward that first job. In this context, publishing (book or magazine) will have an advantage over journalism (newspaper) because it offers an outlet for specialists from any discipline--humanities, social science and science. (At Loyola, we have seen a number of pre-med students, at first depressed by the realization that they would not be suitable medical school candidates, perk up when realizing that their life-long interest in science could be actualized through a career in publishing.)

Newspaper and broadcast journalism, with its melange of

daily and weekly topics, does not have a strong appeal to the non-generalists, despite the fact that the larger papers and broadcast stations employ specialists, many of whom had to cover the usual police, fire and crisis stories before earning a specialized beat. Reaching academe's nascent specialists is little more than a marketing problem.

Designing an appropriate magazine curriculum hinges on a more general approach--one that does not abandon professionalism but positions the program to attract students within the communications disciplines and from other disciplines as minors. At Loyola, we call the concentration "Publishing" and, having done that, we have semantically bound together the "book" and the "magazine" interests. The "Publishing" nomenclature also gives a business and technology cast to the program that widens its appeal.

The publishing overview more accurately presages the entry level positions that graduates will find open to them in the industry. In addition to the basic journalistic writing skills underpinning all such curricula, additional skills are required in evaluating and editing long fiction and prose pieces, graphics, word processing, desktop publishing and other computer applications, reviewing, production and typography, advertising and marketing, promotion and public relations, legal aspects (rights, permissions, copyright, etc.), telecommunications, and the ability to generate editorial concepts geared to specific audiences and markets.

Since precious few graduates can break into the publishing industry as staff or freelance writers or editors, the opportunists find entree through the support services to the main publishing activity. Such areas include royalties, permissions, research, fact checking, sales (on the road or in house), circulation and subscriptions, production (proofing, etc.), traffic, readers, author correspondence, promotion (trade shows, press releases, author tours), writing book jacket copy, etc. These varied skills do not require an equal variety of courses to support them; most can be acquired through a deft combination of courses, laboratories and internships--and most of the courses are already available, merely waiting for an educational entrepreneur to structure them into a publishing configuration. Whether one's primary focus is book or magazine publishing, the student will need similar skills and courses for either area.

The decision to initiate a publishing major or sequence rests on the ready availability of certain courses in the curriculum, a local pool of adjunct faculty talent, and a market for the program based on potential students and employment data in the region served by the college.

At the time Loyola College was considering establishing a communications major, we used AEJMC data to survey the programs offered by colleges in the seven states in the Maryland area. We identified only two colleges that offered an undergraduate publishing major, and none in our vicinity. This told us that there was either no demand or that other factors were arrayed

against the institution of such a program.

We consulted data from the Educational Testing Service which revealed that about 30,000 college-bound high school seniors in the region indicated an interest in a communications career and of this group about 15,000 would be interested in print media. While there was no way to predict how many of this potential group would be interested in book and magazine publishing, sharing even a small percentage of this large cohort with two other colleges seemed viable.

Finally, we examined data on the number of companies and employees engaged in the publishing business in Loyola's region and we came up with 4,837 firms with 100,018 employees. Using a conservative guesstimate that the turnover for entry level jobs was 2.5%, we projected about 2,500 entry-level job openings a year in the publishing field in the seven-state area from which Loyola draws its students.

We were convinced that a Publishing major or minor would enable our students to do well in this job environment. And since there is so much scientific and medical publishing going on in Baltimore, we saw unique opportunities for science majors with a minor in publishing. Loyola's curriculum, tuned to the realistic span of entry-level jobs available in the industry, combines courses in journalism, writing, editing, graphics, production publishing, and business.

A typical program of study looks like this:

--Common Liberal Arts Core: Effective Writing, Sociology of

Mass Communications, and Statistics.

--Communications Core: Publications Graphics, The Creative Eye (writing course), Basic News Writing.

--Major Courses: Manuscript Evaluation and Editing, Writing Book Review and Promotional Copy, Magazine Article Writing, Essay Writing, Audience and Writers' Voices, Book Publishing Senior Seminar and Lab, Magazine Publishing Senior Seminar and Lab.

Interdepartmental Courses: Communication Law, Introduction to Business, Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Public Relations.

Optional Communications Electives: Feature Writing, Advertising Graphics, Introduction to Creative Writing, Basic Photography, Photojournalism, Copy Editing, Fiction Writing, Reviewing.

In addition, the recommended language is Latin and the recommended minor is English. All students must also do a stint on the student newspaper during their sophomore year, at which time they learn the word-processing and typographic systems that serve the curriculum. Those interested in publishing can also work in advertising, promotion, circulation and subscriptions. Thus all students bring to their advanced courses an experiential base. While engaged in upper division course work students are further encouraged to do up to four internships, none of which count toward the major.

Thus the publishing concentration at Loyola is based on a sound assessment of the market for students and jobs and similar

competitive programs. Almost all the applicable courses were designed to bridge a number of concentrations, requiring the introduction of only four highly specialized courses (supplemented strongly by internships) to flesh out the concentration. It is within the senior seminars and labs that many of the specific skills alluded to earlier are learned and applied, such as desktop publishing and computer graphics.

The future of the Publishing Concentration at Loyola, like any other college big or small, depends on how many classroom seats are filled for each specialized course. And in a college where the maximum enrollment in a writing or media course is 20, the breakeven point is not difficult to reach. By staffing our four specialized courses with adjunct faculty, all of whom are practicing professionals with appropriate academic credentials, we have held down the impact of the Publishing Concentration on the departmental and college budget. Commitment to a full-time publishing position awaits the verdict of future enrollments, but there would be a reluctance to dissociate the adjuncts from the program. They supply the major with a strong and diverse industry-professional connection.

The experience of researching, establishing and running the Communications Program with its Publishing Concentration, at Loyola College has led me to a number of theoretical conclusions that hopefully will stimulate continuing discussions and research by magazine faculties to fully examine the publishing rubric as a context for establishing the magazine curriculum as a distinct

major allied to, but not subsumed within, the news-editorial sequence.